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THE PUBLICAN'S PRAYER:

A Sermon

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St. Luke, xviii. 13.—"God! *be merciful to me, a sinner!*"

There never rose to Heaven more acceptable incense than this short, this comprehensive, this heart-touching prayer. It is an epitome of devotion adapted to the child as to the hoary head, to the ignorant as the sage, to the wavering sceptic as well as the matured in grace. It is the purest model proposed for the imitation of the Church, and which, used in the spirit that breathed it, will render Jehovah propitious to the suppliant. Behold the person from whose lips it emanates! A wretched publican, an extortionate tax-gatherer, enters the courts of the temple to offer up his devotions. Pale, solitary, and dejected; he is overwhelmed, amidst thousands, by the weight of his iniquity. Every faculty of his body proclaims the depth of his emotions. His faltering foot, palsied by fear, stands *afar off* from the altar, trembling in shame at the abuse of its mercy. His tear-swollen eye, downcast with suspense, fears, like Belshazzar, to read the horrors of its sentence. His hand, too worthless to be clasped, beats in indignation his agitated breast, while his mouth, his tongue, his heart, cry aloud in concert, the language of the bitterest remorse; God! God! *be merciful to me, a sinner!* Such was the prayer which Christ assures us *justified* the contrite publican, and which he thus holds out as a model to instruct us in the matter of our devotions.

Would you be informed, brethren, of the cause that rendered this prayer so effectual, and which obtained from the Redeemer

so rich and transporting a sentence! Are you desirous of being taught the nature of the publican's entreaty, and the mode whereby you may be enabled to become similarly successful! Is it your heart's desire to enjoy that mercy which perishing sinners require, and depart like him from this temple *justified rather than the pharisee!* Consider, then, the particulars which this memorable prayer unfolds.

I. His REPENTANCE, implied in the confession "ME A SINNER."

II. His FAITH in the atonement denoted by the petition, "BE MERCIFUL."

III. His PIOUS DEVOTION founded on both these, "GOD! BE MERCIFUL TO ME, A SINNER."

I. Consider his REPENTANCE implied in the confession "ME A SINNER."

The term "sinner," among the Jews, conveyed an epithet of the darkest reproach, and hence nothing was thought more infamous in CHRIST, than his frequent communication with *publicans and sinners.* In the use of a term so degrading, the publican owns himself, though deemed otherwise by society, the most ignoble wretch in existence, and as "the chief of sinners," with St. Paul, obnoxious to the penalty of a violated law. He enters not like thoughtless thousands of the present day, the temple of their Maker, to offer the accustomed token of civility, in the cold, heartless formality of an unfelt confession. He feels that words, and professions, and show, are too poor to give vent to the torrent of his soul, and though encompassed by multitudes, apparently in quest of the same object, he dares only tremble at his own guilt, and suspect the motives that dictated his confession. As a sinner, he was conscious of inheriting original guilt, felt that he had broken the precepts of the divine law, and, though the last remedy of salvation, had neglected the covenant of grace and the qualifications to interest him in the atonement.

1. The publican was then "a sinner" from original corruption. Taught by the prophet that *we are all as an unclean thing,*

that *the* human *heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked;* he is heard subscribing to the doctrine enforced by the apostle, *as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* From a child, he was conscious of a mind inimical to divine knowledge, and a will radically averse to the commandments of his Maker! Why else in his youth did he manifest such repugnance to restraint, and so inordinate a fondness for the vanities of the world? Why else in riper years became he such a slave to the world, and such an enemy and stranger to the duties his GOD enjoined? Arose it not from that fall of which, though personally guiltless, of its effects he became the sharer? Inheriting these; he knew that without a change, his corrupt soul must be banished from heaven, and sentenced to the curse of which sin is the fountain. Guilty and unrenewed—What could recommend him to the mercy of GOD, since his conduct had been so criminal, and his passions so depraved? How could he hope that a cumberer like himself should be suffered to poison society? How could he rest in peace when he heard the thunder of Sinai denouncing his corruption, and beheld the lightning of GOD's justice flashing to consume him? Behold he approaches THE ALMIGHTY with pious trepidation! *Behold I am vile! what shall I answer thee! I will lay my hand upon my mouth.* Estranged from thy service, Holy LORD, my soul with all its faculties is too worthless for thy acceptance. Alas! my understanding is darkened, my will is opposed, my affections have proved traitors to thy law. Did not thy grace counterbalance thy justice, I should not thus long have been spared, to trample upon thy compassion. But spare, righteous Father, a wretch, who, redeemed by the Messiah, implores thy mercy as the vilest of sinners; and in room of that corruption which debases his heart, O, implant thy own righteousness, infuse thy own Spirit, that he may be sanctified and saved!

2. Not only did original guilt render him a sinner, it was more especially his violation of the Divine precepts that extorted his confession. When he remembered that a single breach of the moral law merited endless death, and that he had ten thousand

times infringed the most of its injunctions, he perceived no possible hope of escaping its penalty. Contrary to light, conviction, and the commands of GOD, he had plunged into pleasures destructive to his own peace, and panted after objects which threatened the ruin of his soul. Often he had falsified his word, been guilty of injustice, disregarded the Scriptures, abused the Sabbath and ordinances of heaven, and profaned through passion the holy name of GOD. How had his levity led numbers astray from the paths of rectitude, and hardened the convictions of his own soul against the piercing upbraidings of conscience! What have been the omissions that have crimsoned his past life! How often through shame has he shrunk from censuring the guilty, and suffered the selfishness of his heart to freeze up the fountain of charity! The cry of the unrelieved widow or the orphan rings dolefully in his ears, and he yet hears the groanings of those perishing sinners whose souls he might have been the means of rescuing from death. How frequently had he refused to extend the hand of forgiveness, and to gratify his malice, he had defamed the reputation of an envied neighbor! Why has he neglected the worship of GOD in his closet, his family and the Church, and dared to live for every other object but piety, heaven, and JEHOVAH!

Regarding the spirituality of the moral law, the publican knew that the thoughts and purposes of his heart were frequently criminal; and though in the estimation of the world, his conduct might appear laudable, yet its governing motive too often, alas! was the indulgence of his pride and passions. How recalls he those nameless vices committed under the veil of secrecy, and night, which he would blush at, if exposed to the observation of the world! How dwells he on those silent criminal reveries of the mind known only to his GOD and his own immortal soul! Though his hands are unstained by blood, yet the malice of his heart has embrued them in as awful a crime. Though unpractised in sensuality, yet his lawless wishes and thoughts enstamp him a sensualist in the sight of his Maker. Though he has never embezzled his neighbor's goods, yet his covetous desires have accused him of the crime. Though free from the excesses of the table, yet his unrestrained passions and will have reigned the monarchs of his reason.

3. To add to his despair, he had neglected the sole remedies of salvation, and by impenitence and disregard of a mediator's sacrifice, he had become an enemy and outcast to the covenant of mercy. He had neglected hitherto to approach the Divine presence, *with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning—to rend his heart and not his garments, and turn unto the* LORD *his* GOD! He had refrained from applying to the mercy seat with a *lowly and contrite spirit*, as such only was the habitation of his spotless Creator, and as such was the sacrifice so earnestly demanded by heaven! He had refused to look for acceptance alone through *the seed of the woman*—the promised *Shiloh*, whom all the bleeding victims prefigured, and his only hope of salvation rested in uncovenanted dependence on the ceremonial observances of the law. Cruel to reflect, he had abused his mercies, forgotten his duties, slighted the awakenings of the HOLY SPIRIT, rejected his Maker's ordinances, and neglected those sacrifices which were typical of his Cross.

O GOD! How unspeakably enormous the catalogue of his rebellions! How vainly has he strived to elude the lightning of thine all-seeing eye! How rashly contended with thine arm, whose stroke is annihilation! How madly has he swelled the list of his crimes to draw down upon his head the thunders of thy vengeance!

The wretched publican looks to the earth in tears. He sees no star to guide him through the darkness, but the star of Calvary; no fountain to wash away his guilt, but the fountain of a Savior's blood. His words were few, but his heart spoke infinitely more. That faltering step—that fearful distance—that down-cast eye—that indignant hand, attested louder than volumes, the anguish of his emotions. He who demands not words to express the feelings of the soul, heard the ingenuous confession, beheld the deep-toned sorrow, witnessed the love and devotedness of spirit which that inimitable prayer disclosed. Sending his angel to impart the message of forgiveness, He inspires the outcast mourner with the dawning joys of hope. The publican discerns the cross of Calvary through the sacrifices on the altar, and proclaims his unwavering faith in the Savior to whom they pointed.

II. Consider then his FAITH in the atonement, denoted by the petition, "BE MERCIFUL."

The original word "be merciful," is the same that signifies "the mercy seat," and denotes the atonement made by the blood, of which sacrifices were the symbols and types. Every morning and evening a lamb was sacrificed in the temple, and the altar of incense at the same time sending up its smoke, rendered, from their reference to CHRIST, the prayers of the worshippers acceptable. It was alluding to this very sacrifice and incense, that the publican found his hope of pardoning mercy. Be propitious to me a sinner, (he exclaims) O my GOD, by virtue of these offerings which typify JESUS CHRIST. For thy name's sake, O LORD be merciful to my sins, for the sake of that mercy seat which shadows forth the Messiah!

The vague hope of dependence on the mere mercy of GOD sustained not the heart of the penitent criminal. He had heard the thunders of Sinai denouncing his sentence, and he knew that without a ransom, mercy could not be granted. As the compassion of GOD must tally with his justice, he saw they combined alone in him in whom *mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other.* How could he hope for mercy—he who had broken the precepts of the divine law, and quenched the convictions which that mercy addressed to him! How could he expect mercy—he who had spurned the compassion of JEHOVAH, and proclaimed by his rebellion that he neither valued nor desired it! Did he found his hope of acceptance on the blood of the sacrificed victims? He remembered that even these were *an abomination* unless accompanied by the oblation of *a broken and contrite heart.* He derives no comfort from the hope that even his reformation will appease the justice of GOD. Though discharging the whole law, he could never atone for the sins of his past life, and cancel the punishment they justly demanded. Subsequent obedience can never remit the previous crimes of the criminal, and until the claims of justice be rigorously satisfied, his reformation is unentitled to the acceptance of his judge. How then could the reformation of the publican expiate the sins he had committed! Would GOD accept of virtues like his, defiled

by such corruptions, and deriving their acts too often from motives so impure! Would even the merits of the holiest assuage the Divine justice, when they fall so far short of the heavenly model, and are counterbalanced by such infirmities that poison their noblest offerings!

No; Brethren! Though multitudes manifest their reliance on such supports, the reviving publican regards them all with scorn. Beholding nothing in himself meriting the Divine favor, he looks alone to the cross on Calvary, typified before him by the bleeding lamb. Here it is that his trembling spirit bows as the only remedy to escape perdition. Here the affections of his soul concentrate, and here the cry of mercy is so fervently directed. There stands the wretched mourner as if abandoned of every hope, and imploring the divine clemency through the merits of the Cross. GOD! he exclaims, *be merciful to me, a sinner!* It was the same cry heard from the patriarch Abel, when *offering the firstlings of his flock* as an expiation to GOD. It was the same prayer heard from the lips of all the patriarchs, reechoed from prophets and princes around the Holy of Holies; and from CHRIST'S day to the present, has resounded from the lips of every penitent publican. GOD! *be merciful to me, a sinner. The blood of bullocks and of goats,* with all the offerings of the old law, depicted the display of that sacrifice which swells now the prayer of the Christian Church. By the propitiation of these, the souls of millions have been freed from their spiritual chains, and the promises of mercy have enlivened their disconsolate hearts. It was this faith that hushed into a calm the distresses of the publican, that bade him approach with boldness the altar he avoided, that wiped the rolling tear from his cheek, and lighted up his eye and his heart with a joy they never knew before. Happy publican! May every soul like thee enjoy from his Lord the same enviable sentence! Spirit of JEHOVAH! inspire every heart and lip with the same celestial emotions! Blessed principle of Gospel faith! conduct us ever with the publican to the altar of divine mercy, and till the last fluttering pulse of life, assure us that we are *justified* by the Savior, and prepared to hold communion with him in his temple of glory!

III. Consider, also, the publican's DEVOTION; "GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME, A SINNER!"

Alarmed at his danger, the publican applies alone to JEHOVAH in the heart-melting petition—"O, GOD." Though the world often yielded him a transient relief, he remembered it was perishing, and incapable of imparting any solid ground of hope. Too long he had sought it in the cares of business, the joys of sense, and the dreams of scepticism. But now despairing of them all, he repairs alone to his GOD, and beseeches HIM in mercy to soothe his disconsolate heart. He felt that the world resembled the dim, cold moonlight of winter, and that the presence of GOD, like the sun, could alone enlighten and warm him. With the prince of Israel, the language of his heart declares—*Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee!* and with the inflexible Jacob he is heard proclaiming —*I will not let thee go until thou bless me.* Approaching in abject sorrow the presence of the King of King's; the burden of his prayer is the bestowal of MERCY. What more suitable language could a ruined sinner adopt! What stronger plea suggest to palliate his guilt! How else implore salvation! In what other mode draw near the insulted majesty of Heaven! *O* "GOD," he exclaims, *Be* thou *merciful!* Having nothing to offer in my own extenuation, I only dare implore thy pardoning compassion, and rest my every hope on the riches of thy grace. *O* GOD, *the* FATHER *of Heaven*! *O* GOD, *the* SON! *O* GOD, *the* HOLY GHOST! *Thou, Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, three persons, and one* GOD, *have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner! Have mercy upon* ME! Though I pray for the world, it is my first, most fervent of prayers that thou wouldst first crown *me* a subject of thy new creating grace. *Bless me, even me, also, O my Father*, and while so many thousands are being gathered in thy fold, let *me* not perish, the soul of thy own creation, the spirit which thou hast redeemed by the blood of thy only Son!

1. This subject addresses those who depend on their own *morality*, and feel not themselves *sinners* with the publican before them. If we are not *sinners, miserable sinners*, brethren, then JESUS CHRIST was never sent to *reclaim us*, for it was *only* such, remember, who were the subjects of his ministry. If we are

not *sinners, miserable sinners*, then the death and righteousness of CHRIST can be of no avail to save us, for it was to *ransom sinners from the curse* that *he was obedient* to the demands of the law. If we are not *sinners*, perishing sinners, brethren, then the testimony of Heaven, which declares *all have sinned*, is false, and even the Psalmist himself was deceived, when he proclaimed, *there is none good; no, not one.* If we are not *sinners, perishing sinners*, then we are called in vain to *repent of our transgressions*, and to us the exhortation of St. Paul is totally misapplied—*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.* Rejoice, happy souls, independent of the precepts of the Gospel, and purchase your salvation by a *morality* unsanctified by the SPIRIT or the blessing of JESUS CHRIST. Depart to his bar if you can, cheered by the dim taper of your worthless performances, and demand everlasting life, as the purchase of your faithless, impenitent lives!—But are we indeed conscious of having sinned but once, and that once in thought, word, or deed, against the righteous laws of GOD? What then is our hope! What our ground of escaping the impending penalty! If the *single* offence of Adam incurred everlasting death, will ours, committed in the blaze of Gospel day avoid the sentence of despair! But what must be the doom of those who have repeatedly sinned against superior light, and who, added to their neglect of duty, have polluted so often the powers and affections of their souls! Can we exclaim with our hands upon our hearts, that we are not *sinners, miserable sinners*, in the sight of GOD, and that if we expire this very hour, we perish not forever the victims of his justice! Of what avail then to us will be the glitter of our *morals*, our estimation in society, our criminal self-deluding flattery! Though contributing much to the welfare of society, the enjoyment of our firesides, or the indulgence of our vanity; we may have done nothing, alas! for the glory of GOD, the interests of his Church, or the salvation of our imperishable souls. We may find that Heathen philosophers were as virtuous, and perhaps more virtuous than us; and with all the light that illumined our sky, we may deplore the awful darkness that blinded us to a knowledge of ourselves. As we dread, then, the consequence of unrepented guilt, let the

penitence of the publican be our immediate model! Here in the silence of these courts, let our souls stay behind from the glory of the Shechinah! With hands clasped in devotion,—with downcast eyes, and bleeding hearts, let our cry pierce the heavens in fervent ejaculation, GOD! GOD! *Be merciful to us sinners!*

2. Be instructed, I intreat you, by the fervency of the publican's faith. Approaching these altars every Lord's day to offer up our devotions, we perceive not the typical sacrifices that sanctified the Jewish Temple, but we behold the altar of salvation which reveals the bleeding Lamb of GOD, and the incense of his atonement rising to Heaven in our behalf. What then are our hopes, when responding with the Church, *there is no health in us*, we implore heaven for *mercy* as *miserable offenders*? On what do we found our expectations of pardon, when invoking the persons of the Trinity, we confess ourselves with the publican, to be perishing—*miserable sinners*! Does the prayer of faith accompany the sacrifice, or are these words uttered regardless of the sentiment, or the remedy they inculcate? Manifest then your faith in the propitiation of JESUS CHRIST! Advancing as outcast rebels to the foot of the cross, let our tears flow at every step, and our confidence wax the stronger as we ponder upon the victim! There is no other dependence but the righteousness of this Savior —no other cleansing fountain, but the fountain of His blood. If our cry for mercy be fervent and sincere, we will evidence our sincerity by feasting upon the sacrifice! Here our faith will be established in partaking of these symbols, and thus our humble cry for mercy, sanctified by a *holy life*, shall be acceptable through the passion of the crucified MESSIAH.

3. Let then the publican's prayer be breathed from every tongue and bosom. Would that every eye that meets mine were cast to the earth in tears! that the sigh of contrition was melting every heart, and subduing the rebellion of every hardened soul! But what is the reason that though this prayer be so frequently repeated, it finds us publicans in form, but pharisees in heart? Is it not owing to our neglect of THE ALMIGHTY, to our carnal attachments and our supreme reliance on the world? Instead of seeking the ordinances of grace, do we not rather fly to the diversions of gaiety—the bustle of society, and the distractions of our worldly concerns?

Approach rather, I intreat you, with the publican, the mercy seat of GOD! Here he is present to hear your prayers, relieve your wants, console your sorrows, and strengthen your infirmities. Here forget that you breathe for any other object but GOD, for any other joy but the bliss of your salvation. While the taper of life yet glimmers in its socket, cry aloud for MERCY, as the vilest of transgressors. Mercy, believe me, is the dearest of all blessings. What would the condemned criminal bestow, could the sweet tones of mercy enliven his hopeless dungeon? The sinner, alas! I realize in his case. I look beyond his postponements, his neglects, his multiplied rebellions, to that closing hour that shall number him with the departed! I follow his trembling spirit, awakening from his last sleep, and summoned, dreadful thought! to the left hand of CHRIST'S bar! Then how loud will the cry of mercy be heard from his agonized breast! How would he give worlds to approach this day, with the publican, this altar of mercy, and manifest his penitence in the lowliest of frames!

Spared then as we are, fellow mortals, let us raise before GOD, the humble cry, and prepare for that day, when mercy shall outweigh worlds. Before we leave these courts, decide, piously decide, whether ours has been the prayer of the unrenewed pharisee, or whether we shall depart to our homes, *justified* with the spirit of the publican. Let the young resolve to mortify their hearts with the publican, and live alone for that mercy which can only sweeten their enjoyments! Let the worldling determine to lay aside his coldness and worldly lusts, and take refuge in due season beneath the shadow of the cross! Resolve, faltering mourner, to hasten to the altar of thy Savior, and receive that blessing which the publican has realized! Persevere in thy prayers, thou devoted servant of JESUS CHRIST! Thy crown is glittering through the fountain of thy tears. While the worldling approaches unconcernedly this consecrated altar—stand thou in trembling sorrow at a distance from thy GOD! While thy grief declares the purity of thy penitence, and thy heart is breaking forth in the ejaculation of the publican—JEHOVAH is even now listening to thy devotion, and will have mercy upon thee a sinner, by virtue of the sacrifice here displayed. GOD! BE MERCIFUL TO THEE, A SINNER! Amen, and Amen!

THE PUBLICAN'S PRAYER.

What was the cry which louder rang
Through Judah's halls of yore,
Than all the hymns by thousands sang,
Than all the prayers they bore?
It was a sinner's heart-felt cry—
A publican's deep, melting sigh—
Have mercy—mercy LORD *on me!*
A rebel, wandering soul from Thee!

What was the prayer which angels caught,
And laid before the throne,
Which sheath'd the sword which justice wrought,
And rich forgiveness won?
It was a lowly sinner's prayer,
O'erwhelmed by guilt, remorse and care—
Have mercy—mercy LORD *on me!*
Tormented by guilt's agony!

What was the tear which wip'd away
The stain and guilt of sin,—
Which lighted up by mercy's ray
Reflected peace within?
It was the publican's big tear
Which wet his cheek with shame and fear—
Have mercy—mercy LORD *on me!*
A sinner pierced with misery!

What was the faith which sun-light shone
Amid earth's shaded toys,
Which, when all other hopes had flown,
Ensur'd celestial joys?
It was the penitent's calm trust
In him *the righteous and the just;*
Have mercy—mercy LORD *on me!*
A ransomed sinner rais'd to thee!

Such be the cry and prayer of all!
Such be our faith and tears!
Such be our hope, whate'er befal,
Till the light of heav'n appears!
What though our bodies melt to dust,
Like victim lambs consumed—we trust
Our souls redeemed from guilt shall rise
Upon their incense to the skies.

J. G.

THE RIGHTEOUS FLOURISHING:

A Sermon

BY THE REV. JOHN GRIGG,
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Psalm xcii. 12.—"*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.*"

WERE a certain king to pardon his rebel subjects on condition that they would lay aside their arms and yield to his authority; were he further pleased to accept their sincere repentance in lieu of perfect obedience, and regard them in the light of those who had never revolted from his service, it is plain that his acceptance of their duty was a mere act of undeserved mercy, which merely considered as obedience what was only a feeble endeavor to attain it.

Previous to original sin, righteousness was the perfect conformity of man to the revealed will of JEHOVAH, *for in the image of* GOD *created he him.* But now, being all of us rebels against him, and morally unable to keep the Divine precepts, he has extended to us all the promise of reconciliation provided that we submissively return to our allegiance, and strive by the aid of his grace to conform to the requirements of his Gospel. As *the faith of Abraham was counted unto him for righteousness*, although his character was polluted by much infirmity and error, so the Gospel proclamation declares that faith in the atonement of JESUS CHRIST, accompanied by sincere though imperfect obedience, justifies all his followers, and entitles them to the appellation of holy and righteous persons. *Therefore*, declares St. Paul, *being justified by faith, we have peace with* GOD, *through our* LORD JESUS CHRIST. Now this reckoning of JEHOVAH must be just, for, since the righteousness of man is the conformity of his will and passions to the particular law which he is under, so if the judge who has competent authority sees fit to adapt his laws to the imperfection of his creatures, and decide that they have conformed to their observance, though in many respects they have fallen

short of them, they may be truly regarded *righteous*, who submit to that standard. They are considered so, in accommodation to their fallen and depraved powers which are morally incapable of obeying a perfect law, and hence they who rely *supremely* on the *sacrifice of the Savior*, and love and serve him with all their hearts *are accounted righteous before* GOD by virtue of the Mediator, *and not their own works or deservings.** Thus, though *there is none righteous, no, not one*, as it respects their entire conformity to the laws of heaven, yet as *all* may be considered so who submit to the Gospel plan of salvation, we perceive that it is only in accommodation to human weakness, and that it is only owing to the free, unmerited grace of JEHOVAH.

The *righteous*, then, are not those who never sin, who never deviate by infirmity from *the pure and perfect way*, for such alas, exist not in the world. But they are those only who ingenuously perform all their duties to GOD, themselves, and their fellow creatures, and with contrite hearts ascribe their sole merit to him who *has loved them and washed them in his own blood.* Thus their virtue consists in integrity of heart and life, receiving from the Savior, as the earth from the sun, all their light, warmth and fertility.

Now nothing more fitly and beautifully characterizes *the righteous* than *the palm tree*, of which the Psalmist speaks in the text, both as it regards their qualities and the blessings which attend them. THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL FLOURISH LIKE THE PALM TREE.

In what respects, then, do the pious resemble this tree, and how may it be said that they *shall flourish like the palm tree?* There are three singular properties of this tree in which they may be compared to the righteous.

I. In their usefulness.
II. In their resistance to external calamity, and
III. In their duration.

I. *The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree* in their *usefulness.*

* See XI. Article of the Church.

The works of GOD not only manifest his power, wisdom, and benevolence, but illustrate the laws and doctrines of Divine revelation. That certain qualities of animal and vegetable nature should typify and explain the operations of mind and providence; that the air we breathe—the light and comforts we enjoy, should be significant of correspondent gifts to the soul, would be folly in the extreme, unless they were modes of teaching which our limited faculties require. As the mirror reflects and softens down the dazzling rays of the sun, so the works of creation reflect the glory of Divine truth and enable the soul to comprehend their wisdom.

Thus *the palm tree* illustrates *the usefulness of the righteous.* While other trees are distinguished by their devious trunks, this tree shoots perpendicularly upward to a considerable height, and *thus* resembles the *pious* mind, whose inclinations and pursuits ever tend toward *heaven.* Even Mahomet could say of the generous man: "he stands erect before his Lord: in every action he follows the impulse received from above, and his whole life is devoted to the welfare of his fellow creatures." Rearing its stem, and diffusing its refreshing shade in dreary solitudes, where nothing else can be found to shelter the exhausted traveller, how beautifully does this tree exemplify the character of the Christian in the midst of a *desert* world, who, when nothing else can satisfy or refresh the weary spirit, becomes alone a refuge of solace and support! Bearing its branches only on the top, the palm tree diffuses thence a most grateful shade upon all who are below; and is it not in a similar manner that they who are enlightened and *warmed* by the spirit of Christian faith and charity, become a *shade* to the friendless, the destitute, and the afflicted? Their elevated principles, and heaven-born affections, like the palm tree's shade from the top, refresh many a *weary* spirit, and sustain *many* a desponding heart. They who refuse to become a shade to others, to exercise a liberal and philanthropic spirit wherever it is needed, forget that they live for others as well as for themselves. They forget that benevolence "blesses him that gives and him that takes," that in proportion as we gratify others, we rejoice ourselves, and that none are more miserable than those who live only to themselves. As the palm tree is repaid for the shade it yields in the cultivation

it receives from the grateful hand it blesses; so they who benefit the needy, often live under the shade of the very bounty they impart, or they enjoy an unspeakable delight in rendering the mourner happy, or they become the objects of those earnest prayers which their liberality has awakened in the hearts of others.

The palm tree is noted for the *abundance* of its fruit. The powerful action of the sap is developed not only in thick umbrageous foliage, but in multitudes of flowers and dates. "The dates hung from these trees," says a learned traveller,* "in such large and tempting clusters, that we climbed to the tops of some of them, and carried away with us large branches with their fruit. Wherever," says he, "the date tree is found in these dreary deserts, it not only presents a supply of salutary food for men and camels, but nature has so wonderfully contrived the plant, that its first offering is accessible to man alone; and the mere circumstance," he observes, "of its presence in all seasons of the year is a never-failing indication of fresh water near its roots. A considerable part of the inhabitants of Egypt, of Arabia, and of Persia," he continues, "subsist almost entirely upon its fruit. They boast also of its medicinal virtues. Their camels feed upon the date stones. From the leaves and branches are made an astonishing variety of domestic furniture and utensils; from the fibres of the boughs are manufactured thread, ropes, and rigging; from the sap is prepared a spirituous liquor; the body of the tree furnishes fuel; and from one variety of the tree meal has been extracted, and has been used for food." Are not thus the righteous pictured forth by this tree? They who "have put on CHRIST" *abound in every good thought, word, and work*, and remembering that they are *the branches of the living vine*, they *yield much fruit of righteousness to the glory and praise of* GOD. Are they not eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, and feet to the lame? Who are readier than *they* to listen to the tale of distress, and, if unable to furnish temporal aid, to impart what is better, the treasures of feeling hearts? Is the Church of CHRIST in want of their assistance?

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* Dr. Clarke.

Who are more unwearied in rendering *its gates salvation, and its walls praise?* As neighbors and citizens—Who are more zealous in alleviating the burdens of one another, and promoting the honor and prosperity of their native land? As Parents and Christians, Who are more assiduous in rejoicing the hearts of their families and friends, and shedding around them, as the sun, light, life, and enjoyment? While the piety of some requires to be trumpeted forth by acts of ostentatious display, the *righteous* are always known, like the secret wells of the desert, by the living verdure about them; for wherever they go, blessings attend their steps. Like the palm, whose "presence is a never-failing indication of fresh water near its roots," their presence is heralded by the happiness of those they have benefited, by the virtuous habits which have sprung up from the good seed they have sown, and by the shouts of industry and plenty which their influence and example have diffused. Go where they will, either in civilized or heathen lands—whether among the illiterate Esquimaux or the polished nations of Europe—and they receive the commendation of all who are around them. They carry with them an atmosphere of light, of cheerfulness, and holiness, which diffuse a grateful fragrance through the circles of society; and though they are not advanced to the highest stations of the empire, yet they receive as much, if not more, real honor from mankind; *For they that honor me,* saith GOD, *I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* Blessed and holy spirits! Go on prospering and to prosper. The tongues of thousands bless you. The hearts of those ye have gladdened leap at your approach. In the Almighty Parent let your root be established, and *from him shall your fruit be found.* In him *your branches shall spread, your beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and your smell as Lebanon.*

II. *The righteous,* also, *shall flourish like the palm tree,* in their *resistance to external calamity.*

Neither weight nor violence can make this tree grow downwards or crooked; but the more it is oppressed, the more it flourishes, the higher it towers, and the stronger and broader it becomes at

the top.* From this singular quality it became the emblem of constancy, patience, and victory by the eastern nations; and hence CHRIST was honored at Jerusalem by the waving of the palm branches; and the redeemed in heaven are described as carrying *palms in their hands*, in token of the triumphs they had achieved. How like indeed to thee, thou Prince of righteousness and life, was the palm that came forth to honor thee! "Eminent and upright, thou art ever verdant and ever fragrant; under the greatest pressure and weight of sufferings, still ascending towards heaven; affording both fruit and protection; incorruptible, immortal, and never fading away!"† Is it not thus with thy servants, thou blessed Prince of Peace; for are they not *members of thy body, thy flesh and of thy bones?* No situation so thoroughly proves the Christian as the afflictions of mortality. The feeblest infant may endure the sunshine, but it requires the man to face the storm. To bravely resist the attacks of calumny and disappointment, and evidence to the world that our piety is invincible and calm; to regard the desertions of fortune and the frowns of pain with composure, remembering that they are the debts and penalties of poor human nature; to walk away from the new-made grave with our hearts wrapped only in GOD, and resolutions more enkindled to benefit the surviving,—these are the characteristics of great and noble minds; but, like diamonds, they have been found in the lowliest situations. Like the waves in the storm, the righteous have been tossed to and fro by the trials of life, but like them they are uninjured; for soon the tempest of suffering subsides, and the light of heaven sleeps upon their

* See Cruden in loco, and H. J. Rose's edition of Parkhurst's Greek Lexicon. "The permanency and perpetual flourishing of the palm leaves, and their form resembling the solar rays, make this tree a very proper emblem of the natural, and thence of the divine light. Hence in the holy place or sanctuary of the temple, (the emblem of CHRIST'S body,) palm trees were engraved on the walls and doors, between the coupled cherubs. See I Kings, vi. 29, &c. The reason given by Plutarch and Aulus Gellius, why they were used as emblems of victory by idolaters, is the nature of the wood, which so powerfully resists incumbent pressure; but doubtless believers, by bearing palm branches after a victory, or in triumph, meant to acknowledge the divine Author of their support and success, and to carry on their thoughts to *the divine Light, the great Conqueror of sin and death.* (See 1 Mac. xiii. 51, xviii. 17.)

† Dr. Horne.

bosom. But why should affliction enervate or unman us? Have we forgotten that the same GOD who gave the *day* gave also the *night*—the storm as well as the calm? They serve the same purpose in the moral as in the natural world. They teach us by contrasts the value of the Divine gifts, and tend to purify the heart from its carnal corruptions. Oh, how many have been indebted to affliction's school! It is *thus* that they have learned themselves and the nature of the world, the mode of enjoying as well as of suffering; and, with the apostle, they have known *both to be full and to be hungry, to abound and to suffer need.*

Let it not be said, that this fortitude is constitutional. Humanity always rebels against suffering; and resignation is acquired by remembering our relation to GOD and the world, and the moral benefits resulting from momentary pain. The merchant, the scholar, the man of pleasure, the ambitious zealot, knows and practises it; for they perceive that in acquiring treasures much is to be endured. In preparing for heaven, the richest of all prizes, the Christian schools his mind to trials, as the pupil to his studies, knowing that they are the means of purifying his nature, and exalting his affections more ardently to GOD. His constitutional passion bows to the influence of his faith. He invokes the aid of the Spirit of THE ALMIGHTY, by whom his virtues and graces are quickened, his repentance and devotion, enlivened and perfected; and enlarging at the top like the holy palm, he is filled with the light and consolations of the Gospel, and *goes on his way rejoicing, looking unto* JESUS, *the Author and Finisher of his faith.*

III. *The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree in their duration.*

Ever verdant, and beautiful, this tree flourishes as well in a desert as on the banks of a river—in a temperate valley, as on a stormy mountain in the limits of perpetual snow. In winter as well as summer, they blossom throughout the year; and they last to a vigorous old age, regardless of the storms and hurricanes that rage around them. A modern traveller* informs us that "the

* Dr. Shaw.

palm tree arrives to its greatest vigor about thirty years after transplantation, and continues so seventy years afterwards;* after this period it begins to decline, and usually falls about the latter end of the second century."

In length of days, also, shall the righteous flourish as this tree. Regarded as a temporal promise, the blessing of a long life may, undoubtedly, be viewed as the heritage of the pious. Solitary cases affect not a general principle, for although many followers of CHRIST are called away in the morning and noon of life, yet regular and virtuous habits, springing from love towards GOD, tend to protract the existence to a venerable age. On the contrary, vicious indulgences, irregular living, and rounds of worldly folly, generally curtail the span of our pilgrimage, while consistent piety, removed from all these excesses, carry it forward to a distant term.

But though we *desire* old age, yet we all fear its approach, and though willing to live, yet we are afraid to die. Old age is a lease which nature grants but to few, and that, upon condition of enduring all its trials.

It has been the prayer of the great and good, that they might never outlive their usefulness: and when we behold the aged, hoary, not with wisdom, but with hairs, we tremble lest they have lived in vain. But when we contemplate the pious patriarch spared for three score years and ten, who has been both parent and priest of his domestic flock, he resembles, indeed, a fruitful palm tree, which, *still yielding fruit in its old age*, is only waiting for the transplantation of the master of the vineyard. Many are they which have flourished thus around us; but their time of vigor and usefulness has expired, and now they beautify, and enrich the paradise of GOD. Holy and immortal spirits! the tears of a whole generation, the Church, and your pious friends, hallow your remains! We love, we honor, we embalm your memory! Once you stood among us, indeed, like venerable palm trees, and though long living under your refreshing shade—though enjoying the rich fruits your love and wisdom imparted, we never

* What a singular illustration is this tree, in this particular, of the period of the vigor and the term of the life of man!

tasted their sweetness till now—we never realized your worth till you were gone!

> "Like birds whose beauties languish, half concealed,
> Till mounted on the wing, their glossy plumes
> Expanded, shine with azure, green, and gold—
> How blessings brighten as they take their flight!"

But the resemblance, faint as it is, goes beyond this world. Though *the righteous be gathered to their fathers*, yet it was only the separation of mind from matter which we wept over;—their immortal spirits soared far beyond these mortal precincts to perfect the life they here began. Oh! my brethren, *'tis not the whole of life to live, nor all of death to die!* See the crystalis cast off its leafy covering, and mount upon golden wings into the air! Behold the torpid insect and bird resuming their suspended vitality, and living again after being enshrouded in a temporary oblivion! Immortal offspring of GOD! are ye not much better than they, and feel ye not holier, and loftier aspirations? Recollect *Enoch* and *Elijah* conveyed to Heaven on chariots of fire! Remember him who burst the icy fetters of the tomb, and *became the first fruits of them that slept!*

Former generations have been swept away,—we ourselves are rapidly following the sad procession, but our immortal spirits cannot die more than matter which merely changes its form. The souls of *the righteous* are still alive, and, though like the air invisible to flesh and blood, yet they exist before GOD, in a glorious form. GOD, *is the* GOD *of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, though their bodies have long ago been mingled with the dust; and although the remains of those we love have been consigned to the winds of Heaven, yet GOD *is not a* GOD *of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto him.*

The promise that *the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree*, still cheers and sustains their souls. They are waiting in the world of spirits, in holy hope for the final catastrophe of nature, when *the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.* They are waiting *under the altar* for the advent of the Son of Man *with clouds*, when *every eye*

shall see him, and the impenitent alone shall quake, and call the rocks and mountains to cover them! They are waiting for the army of angels, and arch-angels, Cherubim, and Seraphim, who are coming to convey them to *the joy of their Lord.* They are waiting to hear that beloved voice which shall pronounce to them like the seven thunders—*well done good and faithful servant!* —and to listen to that mighty chorus of *much people in Heaven saying* ALLELUJAH! SALVATION, AND GLORY, AND HONOUR, AND POWER UNTO THE LORD OUR GOD!

Then, when the worldly and profane shall be like the *chaff, which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth:* When the *formalist* and the sceptic shall both be withered and *cut down* as the *barren fig-tree* by its Lord; *when all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh, shall burn them up saith the* LORD *of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch:*—Then men and brethren, amidst the vast and glorious company of angels whose music is waxing ever *sweeter* and *louder*—in *the Heaven of Heavens*, among ten thousand times ten thousands, and *thousands of thousands*, where they shall be dazzled and delighted by the glories of its treasures—*then*, and *there*,—*the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree*—*then*, and *there*, ye faithful servants of JESUS CHRIST, ye *shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon, for those that be planted in the house of the* LORD, *shall flourish in the courts of our* GOD! *Then*, and *there*, may all of us become *trees of righteousness, the planting of the* LORD, *that he may be glorified*—and to *every one of us*, whether young, or aged, whether bowed down by affliction, or rejoicing in the lap of prosperity—whether elevated by rank, or depressed by the pangs of poverty—may the blessed promise be realized in *rich*, and *enrapturing* reality,—THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL FLOURISH LIKE THE PALM TREE. Amen and Amen.

THE RIGHTEOUS FLOURISHING.

Holy palm! to heaven tending—
Like *the righteous*, ever sending
Upright wishes, words, and doing,
Toward the heaven they're pursuing!

Holy palm! thy top o'ershading
All the *weary, heavy laden,*—
Emblem of the *righteous* blessing,
All in joy or pain caressing!

Holy palm! thy branches bending
Rich with fruits their nurture lending;
Like the *righteous*, kindly yielding
Fruits of holiness unceasing!

Holy palm! thy trunk o'erpow'ring
Every pressure, heavenward towering—
Thus the *righteous*, trials braving,
Make them the blest means of saving.

Holy palm! 'mid ages lasting;—
Storms and calms;—thy verdure casting;
Ev'ry age and climate;—spreading
Fruits of thy perennial shedding.

Thus *the righteous* ever flourish,
Heavenly palms which angels nourish;
Here below in years maturing,
Love, respect, and joy ensuring.

Holy palms! *above* transplanted
By those streams for which ye panted,
You as *righteous* trees, they'll nourish!—
Palms of heaven! you'll ever flourish. J. G.

IMMORTALITY.

Is not the human frame a lyre
  Strung by celestial hands—
Tun'd by the soul's electric fire,
  And waiting her commands?

The soul this instrument essays,
  Breathes music from its wires;
Or strikes to harsh, discordant lays,
  Till its last breath expires.

Then sickness loosens all its strings,
  Its pins dissolve away,
And death remorseless flaps his wings
  O'er music's sad decay.

Borne from the tuneless ruins—see
  Th' immortal Minstrel flies—
Her powers more kindl'd, pure and free
  To mansions in the skies.

Where love and memory alone
  Her song of praise shall send
To him who sits upon the throne,
  Her parent and her friend.

Until the Angel's trump inspires
  Her moulder'd lyre with breath—
Then shall she wake in heaven its wires,
  No more to sleep in death.

J. G.